

BRITISH DIPLOMACY BEFORE 1914

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fact that, owing to the unnecessarily large increase in the German naval programme, a deep distrust in England of Germany's future intentions had been created. This distrust would be still further accentuated with the progress of time, the realization of the German programme, and the increase of taxation in England entailed by the necessary naval counter-measures. In seven or eight years* time a critical situation might arise in which Russia, if strong in Europe, might be the arbiter of peace, and have much more influence in securing the peace of the world than at any Hague Conference. For this reason it was absolutely necessary that England and Russia should maintain towards each other the same cordial and friendly relations as now exist between England and France, which, in the case of England and Russia, are moreover inspired by an identity of interests of which a solution of the Macedonian problem was not the least.*

Here was a direct invitation to turn the *detente* of 1907 into an *entente*, based on our confidence that in the hour of danger Russia would be on our side* Since Germany's strength and ambition seemed likely to threaten our security, Russia would prove a very useful counter in the other scale. It is the familiar story of the Balance of Power.

British policy in the sixteen crowded years illustrated by the *'British Documents'* falls into two chapters. The first, lasting from Chamberlain's informal conversations on an Anglo-German alliance in 1898 to the Reval visit in 1908, witnessed our entry into the Continental system. The second, covering the last six years of peace, confronted us with the task of maintaining and developing the Triple Entente. There are no more striking items in our fifth volume, on the Bosnian crisis, than the private letters between Nicolson

and his chief
when in March, 1909, Iswolsky accepted the
annexation as the
result of what he called a diplomatic ultimatum
from Berlin.
The Ambassador, whom King Edward regarded
as the best
horse in his diplomatic stable, wrote angrily
about the sudden
collapse, and added: " Our entente, I much fear,
will languish
and possibly die. If it were possible to extend
and strengthen
it by bringing it nearer to the nature of an
alliance, it would
then be possible to deter Russia from moving
towards
Berlin. . . . The ultimate aims of Germany
surely are,
without doubt, to obtain the preponderance on
the Continent
of Europe, and when she is strong enough—and
apparently
she is making very strenuous efforts to become
so—she will